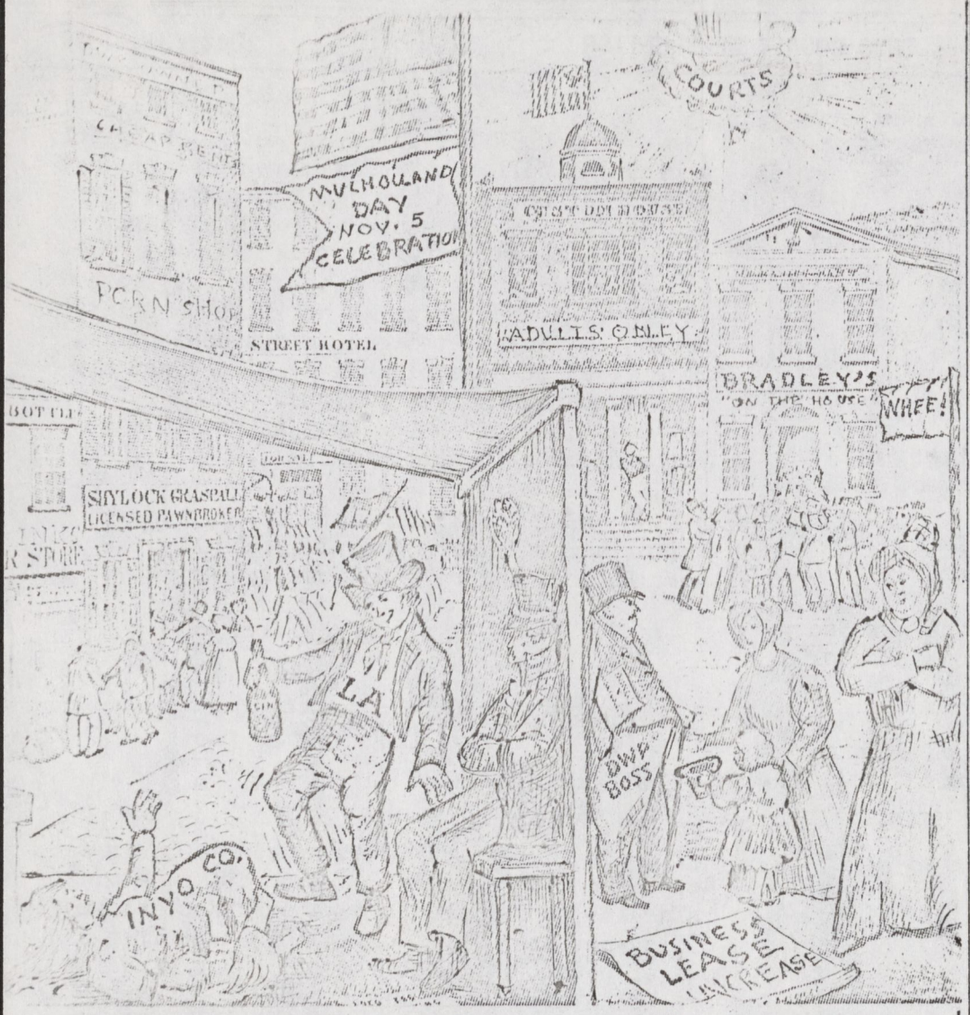

OLD POLITICAL CARTOON PRINT dating to early 19th century is appropriately updated for spoof of a "Mulholland Day" celebration, Nov. 5. Drunken "L.A." kicks "Inyo County."

The INYO COUNTY NEWS-LETTER

A NEWS ALTERNATIVE - EASTERN SIERRA NEWS SERVICE

Compiled by John Heston and Benett Kessler

LIMITED CIRCULATION
Published weekly

Monday
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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

PUBLIC WORKS OFFICIAL SAYS PLANNERS ACCUSING HIM AND SUPERVISOR

The planning commission of Inyo County may have been taking its shots at the assistant director of the county public works department and at a well-known county supervisor last week when it issued a statement charging "conflict of interest" in county departments.

The planning commission said in its public list of charges that "an Inyo County official or officials may be involved financially with the developer of Tract Map #141, thereby being in conflict of interest in their actions and recommendation of approval to the board of supervisors of that tract."

The tract referred to is

(See CONFLICT, Page 5)

ARSON LAWYER

DEFENDANT SAYS HE CALLED MELVIN BELLI, TOP TRIAL LAWYER

One of the defendants in a fire insurance company lawsuit says he has called in a nationally-known trial lawyer, Melvin Belli, to take his case in the Economy Motors fire issue.

Victor Perry who, along with his partner Quint Sondergard, was named in the fire insurance suit, said "for the record" that "Melvin Belli is my attorney. He has taken over the case completely. He feels the same way Quint and I do, that there have been many inequities since Ground Zero."

Belli has attained national fame, primarily through his handling of intricate scientific cases involving medical claims - some of these involving millions of dollars. Perry said he has known the colorful Belli "for a long time." He said his newly appointed lawyer is "very thorough" and that "many things have to be brought up."

Until last week, Bishop's Paul Rudder was acting as the Economy Motors partners' attorney. He verified that he was no longer in the case, but meanwhile clarified his own position in remarks he made concerning the investigation last week. Rudder says now that "I do not charge there was anything wrong with Dave Walizer's handling of the fire, because I know nothing personally of proper arson investigating techniques." Walizer is the state fire marshall for this area, and it had been implied earlier that he was responsible for the bull-dozing of the fire scene - and the possible effect that could have had on an ar-

(See ARSON LAWYER, Page 3)

COURT WATCH

"FOR THE PEOPLE," A CLOSER LOOK AT COURTS

The deputies, all members of Inyo's angry Deputy Sheriffs Association, will establish soon what they call a "court watch" that would keep records of court actions and publicize these. The chairman of an association committee, Deputy Tom Gonzales, says the concept of "court watching" is not new and local application would be patterned after other counties.

"When the people watch," says Gonzales, "the court becomes more conscientious towards peoples' rights. That's what our purpose is. It's for the people."

He said other law enforcement agencies have had "some success" with the idea "when there has been dissatisfaction with the judiciary."

It is the association claim in planning its project that courts "don't pay attention to the police, but they will pay attention to votes, and that's why the association wants the public informed and involved."

Implementation of the deputies' plan is

(See DEPUTIES, Page 3)

»»»» NOTES FROM B.K. «««

BENETT KESSLER

SO WHAT does the full moon have to do with anything? A lot, is the claim of not only the astrologers, but also police (who find crimes of violence go up,) and many hospital people who say patients are "restless." Many doctors say that new mothers due for delivery will often give birth almost at the moment that the last "edge" is off the moon.

Some evidence to that claim came to light (as did the moon) last Wednesday at Lone Pine. Right on the dot at 3:32 p.m. Mom and Dad are David and Cynthy Smith. The new Scorpio (moon in Taurus) is nine-pound Alexander David Smith. All are doing fine, thanks.

***

AND FROM NEW WEST MAGAZINE we furnish this reprint in view of the upcoming "holiday."

LA TIMES PHOTO

THE ANNUAL MULHOLLAND-DAY

Every year in South California, boys and girls will gather on November 5 at the Los Angeles Aqueduct to honor the memory of William Mulholland, the Los Angeles water commissioner who helped rape the Owens Valley. When the high school bands have stopped playing and the only sound you hear is sweetly flowing water, Jack Smith (whose inspiration it was to declare the holiday) will step to the microphones and tell the tale of how, on this day in 1913, William Mulholland stood in the dry, dusty valley. Then Smith will solemnly reenact the moment when the pumps of the aqueduct were turned on and water began gushing through this desert and Mulholland made one of the greatest speeches in the history of Western civilization: "There it is. Take it."

ANYONE FOR CELEBRATING? We might suggest a half-holiday in the schools, bank moratorium, roll out the carpets (red) and calves (fatted), ring the bells and blow the fire whistles. Or how about a wake instead - with another speaker who says: "There it is. Take it back."

***

AH, LOVE!...How eager can you get?

Our county clerk, Rita Bromley tells about hurriedly driving to Bishop the other day to issue an "emergency marriage license."

The clerk at Bishop was out of the office, on sick leave, so Rita took off to help out a panicky couple from Mammoth. What was the big rush? They didn't say, only that they had to be back in Mammoth in 45 minutes. Rita obliged and they gratefully departed.

***

We learned that Bishop gets "about 90 percent" of the marriage licensing out of the Mammoth area. Seems that Bishop is closer than Bridgeport..and, as Rita says, "We offer emergency service after hours."

For the gals who fear he may not ask twice, a handy service...at any hour.

***

REMEMBER PAY TOILETS...and looking for a nickel ? Well, the woman who ended all that in California is on her way here. March Fong Eu, the California secretary of state, is out on the hustings early, looking for votes for her re-election, a step she thinks may later make her governor. Now in her late thirties, March Fong Eu started out on a school board, made it up to assemblywoman - and gained her fame by outlawing pay toilets.

...Now if she could just get them to put restrooms in supermarkets....

***

WHAT A DAY!...Maternity, Marriage, Mulholland and March Fong Eu...and May the news in Your day be good news...Every day.

Sincerely, B.K.

PROTEST COLLAPSES

SOUTHERN INYO HOSPITAL WILL PAY ITS WATER BILL

Considered by its attorneys to be in a "weak position" because of its failure - or refusal - to pay sizeable water and electric bills, Southern Inyo Hospital is "settling out of court." The settlement, terms of which are being kept under wraps because of sensitive negotiations, is "expected anytime," if there are no more demands by DWP attorneys.

Representing the hospital is Deputy District Attorney Greg James, who said that if all goes well, the hospital "will go over to the Independence DWP office and pay the bill." The settlement came after James conferred with L.A.'s lawyer, Ed Schlotman, but he warned that even now (at week's end) the agreement is only "tentative." He appeared optimistic about settlement of the suit, one in which the department seeks to recover about $6000 in unpaid bills, only part of which had to do with the hospital's "protest" against DWP's suddenly increased metered rates.

The hospital was already in financial straits when the metered increases ran up the water bill by several hundred percent. Then without serving legal notice that they were contesting the charges, the hospital directors apparently joined with the county government to withold payment.

But part of the bills, admits James, were indisputably legitimate having nothing to do with the increases. But still another point left the hospital vulnerable: the apparent fact of its failure to file suit (as did the county), or to take some legal action toward its own protection. DWP rapidly moved in with a lawsuit, filed some weeks ago, and made no bones about wanting its money.

James expressed pleasure over the availability of cash on hand to pay up. Asked what other course the hospital may have taken, he said the hospital administration could have defended the position that the Public Utilities Commission has jurisdiction over rate increases (as does Inyo County in its own lawsuit), but that even then it would have been a "weak defense" in that the hospital had not made necessary legal preparation.

MOVIE PARTY LAWSUIT

BISHOP WOMAN SUES UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

Universal Studios, Inc., the movie-maker, is being sued as host of a party at which a young Bishop woman fell and injured her leg.

According to the lawsuit, which was filed in Inyo Superior Court by 24-year-old Debra Niehans, the party was held for cast and film crew members during the filming of "The Other Side of the Mountain, Part II," last summer in Bishop.

According to Niehans' attorney, Paul Rudder, she was "a friend" of one of the film crew members, and a guest at the cast party. He said she apparently slipped on a metal pan and fell down, injuring her knee. The lawsuit suggested that there was ice in or around the pan, causing "a dangerous condition on the walking surface."

The party was held at "Hardy Road" near north Round Valley Road outside of Bishop.

Contacted at her home for comment, Niehans would say only that she is still undergoing "therapy" for her injured knee. She is suing the studio for $10,000 to cover loss of earnings, and medical costs.

The CENSUS

COUNTING THE COUNTY'S HEADS, CENSUS INCLUDES GOOD AND "BAD"

Confronted with one of the county's census takers, Fred Flowers joked: "You're not going to count me...Nobody likes me...I'm a bad guy because I collect taxes !"

To which Enumerator Bill Tovell dryly replied: "We count the bad guys, too. The computer doesn't know the difference."

And so it went throughout the county in recent days as the census-taking went on. The flock of enumerators, scattered even to the remotest areas, were hoping to "wrap it up in the next few days."

Says Tovell of his head-counting experience: "Everyone's been cooperative. In fact a few are overly friendly; many want to invite us in, but we're not allowed to and it's hard to say no.

"Maybe one in a hundred is a little reluctant to answer our questions...but they do anyway, even when we have to ask how many bedrooms, bathrooms, people in the family - and what's your ethnic background...No problems."

At week's end something over 60 percent of the county had been covered by the census takers. No date has been set for completion, said Census Supervisor Beverly Varess of the California State Department of finance.

Officials of various departments of the county government, and most of all the supervisors, have a stake in the census count and watch with interest the returns on a questionaire they asked the enumerators to leave at each home visited. Using the census as a poll organization, they are hoping to find out the public's sentiments on a number of issues. They have found, sometimes to their surprise, an eager willingness on the part of many to answer their questions and mail in the form.

NEWS-LETTER'S "COMPLIMENTARY" LIST

Again this week a number of new names have been added to NEWS-LETTER's mailing list, and some others removed. It is the editors' hope to acquaint everyone in the county with the "alternative" news coverage provided in NEWS-LETTER. Each week about 200 new names are added, and about that many removed. To be sure you receive NEWS-LETTER every week, mail in your subscription today and join our rapidly increasing number of regular readers.

ARSON LAWYER, Continued

son investigation. Rudder says he has "been the recipient of remarks indicating that the bull-dozing was a questionable procedure, but I will let the facts stand for themselves."

Meanwhile, the famous Belli, whose prestigious law firm is located at San Francisco, "will be coming over here" (to Inyo County), according to Perry. Asked when the lawyer will arrive, Perry said, "I don't know when, yet."

Perry said Belli will help him in filing a countersuit against the insurance company "fairly soon." After the fire, the company refused to pay the fire claim on the destroyed auto parts facility and instead filed suit in Inyo County claiming the fire was deliberately set.

Last week, meanwhile, Walizer met with District Attorney L.H. "Buck" Gibbons to go over evidence he said he found at the fire scene. Gibbons acknowledged on Friday that he met with Walizer, but would say no more. He had been asked earlier if specific charges were to be filed in the case, but he also declined comment in that.

The meeting was set after the fire marshall revealed that "arson" was "definitely" the cause of the Economy Motors fire which erupted last February.

Although Royal Globe Insurance Company claimed the fire was "set," the lawsuit fell short of making specific charges against either of the two partners; nor has the fire marshall or district attorney made specific accusations.

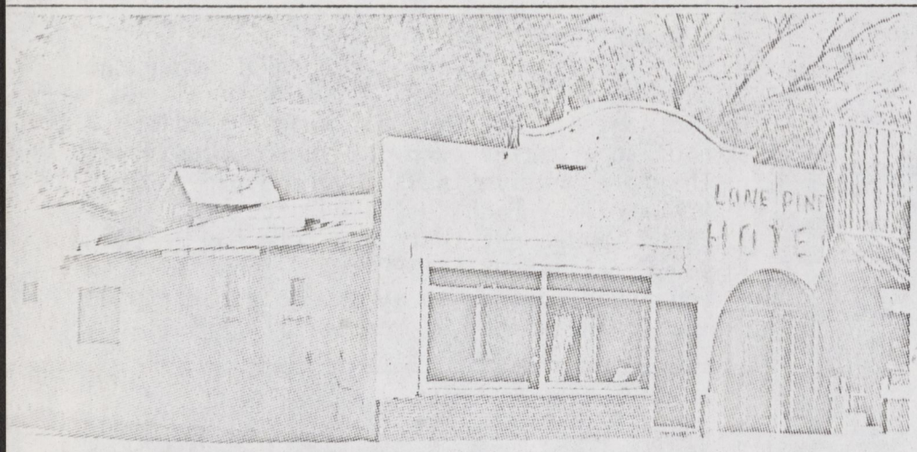
DEPUTIES, Continued

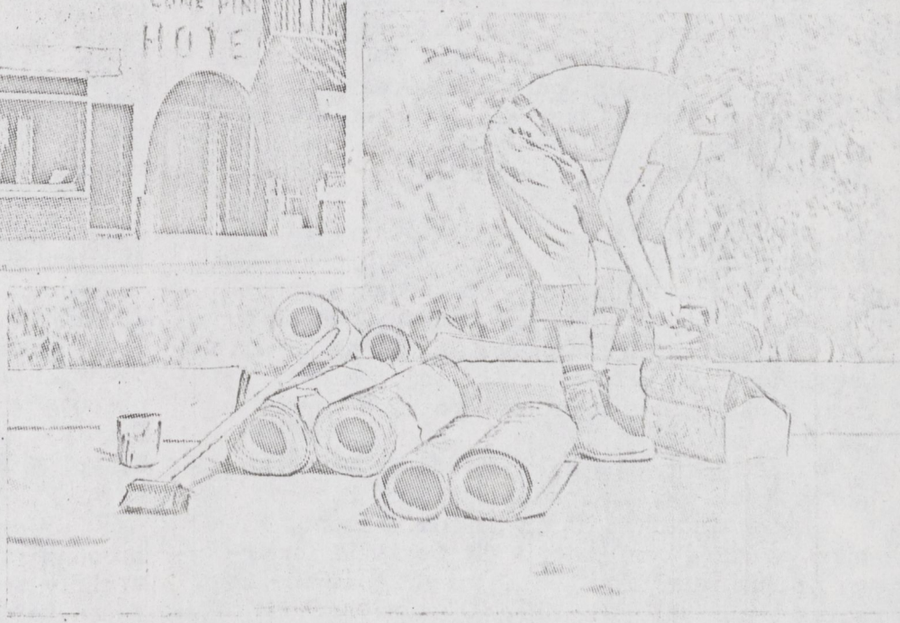
another matter. Whether the media in Inyo is ready at this time to publish the name of every sentenced miscreant - or whether it has the space or time to - is a matter as yet undecided. But that problem may be resolved when the deputies, now awaiting word from other counties on similar programs, present their own plan.

The plan follows by two weeks the list of complaints and charges, widely publicized, that the deputy association made in a sudden press release aimed at the county criminal justice system. "Light" sentencing and low bail fees were their chief targets. As to the question of the deputies' aims in their attack on the courts - an attack largely supported by law enforcement higher-ups - Gonzales restated and re-emphasized "for the people."

"The citizen is in danger and loses property daily...

"Look," said the deputy, "Nobody steals from us. We have guns."





CETA WORKER atop old hotel installs new roofing. Martin Cohn and Dave Tallent, both of Keeler, work full time on project under CETA "Title VI" program. But project directors must provide materials.

RENOVATION

WITHOUT FUNDS, SOME ROUGH GOING, BUT HOTEL PROJECT SHOWS PROGRESS

Although a visit to the Lone Pine Hotel renovation project reveals something less than furiously bustling activity, the reconstruction is "coming along" with, or without, much-needed manpower and materials.

Backed and supported indirectly by the CETA program (which provides two workers at $3.70 per hour), by the Department of Water and Power which so far has taken a "wait-and-see" position before establishing a rent fee, and by the efforts of a few volunteers, the project is at least continuing, albeit at a snail's pace. It is unlikely that the dreamed-of shops and art displays will be moving into the revitalized quarters within the near, or even foreseeable, future.

The sponsors of the project - Lone Pine Chamber of Commerce and Southern Inyo Artisans Guild - have already gone through $2000 of patiently gathered funds. Chamber Manager Pat Farlander says another $4,000 will probably be needed for completion. The program was initiated primarily by the nostalgic's idea that the historic old hotel should be preserved, and part by the practical need for a place for south-county artists and craftsmen to show and sell their produce. The Lone Pine Hotel was in its heyday shortly after the turn of the century - about the time that L.A. was building and opening its aqueduct. Although it has seen its last days as "a hotel," its inner patio and collection of service rooms and guest quarters may in fact provide the arty quaintness favored by the arts crowd and their customers.

Once renovated, it would also house an office for the chamber of commerce itself.

So far, money has come from donations and from various fund-raising programs in the southern end of the county. "Money," said the chamber manager, "is a concern. We will gladly accept used lumber and volunteer work."

To say the least.

Guild members meanwhile may be turning northward to the Bishop area where they hope more fund-raising programs - and consequent cash influx - may refill the nearly-empty coffers. The Guild has "a few members" in the north part of the county.

For all their money and help problems the sponsors of the project can show even now some solid progress: a new, or tightly repaired, roof, new paint where construction and drywall work are complete - and the clearing away of old fixtures and debris which in their time were more suited to hotel accomodations than to the demands of modern shops.

REFURBISHING

"BIGGEST ANTIQUE" IS THE FOND PURCHASE OF SOUTHLANDER

Another of the county's old hotels will soon be refurbished if an Orange County antique collector and former Rockwell employee has his way. He is Gary Born who decided some time back to "get away from it all," buy the old Little Lake Hotel, and move here with his family.

As far as changes in the old structure, Born says he "just wants to bring back the nostalgia of the hotel," adding some antiques (his hobby) "inside and outside."

"I guess," said Born, "that the hotel is the biggest antique I've got."

Born's "biggest antique" is a garish pink structure looming over a hillside on Highway 395, at the brink of the drop of Owens Valley into Indian Wells Valley. Built originally in 1854, it has burned down twice and was rebuilt in concrete in 1923. For years it has played host to hunters and fishermen in the area and Born himself has visited for the past 15 - to hunt near Kennedy Meadows.

Born brought to Inyo his wife, Cathy, their three children, and father-in-law Nestor Vandebrande, a partner in the venture. They bought the old "Little Lake" property for an unspecified amount from Larry and Irene Armstrong who operated the facility for the past nine years and who have been friends of the purchasers for nine years.

And about that pink concrete? Born's plans for now include only some improved wiring and plumbing, addition of carpets, and soundproofing the bar.

CONFLICT, Continued

one of the Dean Knight developements near Big Pine - and the officials referred to...?

Well, the assistant public works director, Roger Glidden says he thinks the planning commission "conflict of interest" charge refers to him and to Supervisor Wilma Muth.

When asked for verification on that, the chairman of the planning commission, Glenn Meyer, declined comment. He said, however, that the commission "deliberately did not pinpoint any individual. But if anyone wants to check, including the grand jury, the information is available."

Glidden said he "has nothing to hide," and readily confirmed longstanding reports that the prominent developer is building a house for him. He said the house is costing him about $50,000. "I have nothing to hide about that. I know who they're talking about; me and Wilma Muth. I can't think of anybody else."

As for Glidden's part in making any official approval of Knight's mobile home project at Big Pine, Glidden said he had very little to do with it. He said the only variance on the project that had anything to do with his department was one concerning road conditions - one in which two inches of paving, instead of three inches of paving, had been okayed by his department. And even in that okay, Public Works Director Bob Fisher had made the recommendation, according to Glidden.

Glidden said that he has done some surveying for Knight and was "involved" with his last project, but in no major way.

Supervisor Wilma Muth returned from a vacation trip to Mexico Sunday night just in time to land right in the middle of the ongoing planners-supervisors issues. "I am appalled," she said.

Muth said her concern lay not so much in the charges and accusations but "in the way they brought out these issues. We had a meeting together. If they have accusations, this was a poor way to do it. It could have been brought out at the meeting.

"The board (of supervisors) had asked the county counsel about Knight's developement all along. We'll probably have to go through some items again."

Turning directly to the implications of the assistant public works director, Muth said flatly, "I don't have any part in the developement. If I have something, I'd like to know what."

Following lines of persistent rumor, the public works man had suggested that the planners were probably thinking Muth's shares in the Inyo-Mono National Bank, and the possibility that the bank might be financing Knight, formed the basis of their "conflict of interest" charge. To this Muth said, "We have several hundred shareholders at Inyo-Mono. We have stock in several banks. Does that make me in conflict?" She named the other banks that she and her husband, a prominent optometrist, have invested in: Security Pacific, Mariposa, and Bank of America.

The Bishop supervisor said that her husband had been contacted by Knight. "Mr. Knight has tried to convince my husband to buy into his developement. When my husband asked me, I told him 'What are you interested in?"

"I think every businessman has been called. No I have never had any financial dealings with Mr. Knight personally."

Muth went on concerning her relationships - or lack of them - in the Knight issue. Her statement fell far short of being a counter-attack against the planning commission: "I appreciate the frustrations of the planning commission, but they've also been frustrated in other areas when involved in appeals.

"They do a tremendous amount of work. It is frustrating when you feel you're doing a job which you're involved in and another body changes it in any way."

When asked who she thinks the planning commission is accusing in their "conflict of interest" charges, Muth said, "I don't know who they are talking about. I had the urge to call and ask, but I said, no, I'll just wait."

Finally, the supervisor was asked if Dr. Muth has bought a lot in the Knight developement, or if he plans to. She replied: "He hasn't bought it and I don't think he's thought about it since."

And about the whole issue: "I'm very disappointed. I wish it had been on an eye-to-eye basis."

As for the planning commission's resolution, it concerned itself about changes in Knight's project definition and failure on the part of the board to order what it calls "proper" environmental studies on the project.

The Knight issue had first come up as an irritant between the planning commission and the supervisors when they recently held a joint meeting at Bishop. At that time, Supervisor Herbert London had admitted publicly that "Knight was one of the best salesmen in Inyo County," and that he had gotten "what he wanted out of the board."

Knight refuted in a paid advertisement and also in talking to reporters, the charges made. He said his project was clear and legal "to the letter of the law."

It was the charge of the planners that the board had allowed continuing changes in the original plan for the developement without making public notice and setting up public hearings.

One of the planners at the meeting - Pat Wiltsie - charged that the roads in the project might be in bad shape "some hot summer day."

"BUGG" FINDS A HOME

A PREYING MANTIS FINDS EASY LIFE IN NEWSROOM

"Bugg," the ignobly named preying mantis that flew into NEWS-LETTER'S production room five weeks ago and was given water in drops off the end of a penstaff, is now a permanent resident. NEWS-LETTER staff members have discovered that mantises, usually much maligned, are harmless, even friendly.

"Bugg" dines off raw egg, milk, and an occasional bit of hamburger - all hand-fed. He appears to like attention and won't bite.

FRANK MEDINA is safe after water heater exploded, blowing out windows and starting small fire. Smelling gas, Medina had run from house to turn off his tank, and explosion occurred while he was outside. In the house damage was estimated at several hundreds of dollars.

SUICIDE: DEATH VALLEY ATTRACTS ANOTHER VICTIM

For an unhappy few, Inyo County's Death Valley area continues to manifest its compelling attraction as a remote and desolate place to end life. Many in recent years - perhaps as many as a dozen in a decade - have retreated to the valley's lonely mine roads and hidden canyons to quietly kill themselves.

So it was this past weekend with a 23-year-old La Puente man, Craig Wizek.

The youth wrote a note to his parents, then drove two miles off a main road in the Homewood Canyon area north of Trona. When he was found he was dead by carbon monoxide poisoning. Officers found a vacuum-cleaner hose connecting the car's exhaust pipe with an opening near the back seat inside the car. Coroner Ted Sullivan, along with two deputy sheriffs, drove to the scene after they were notified by the San Bernardino sheriff's office Sunday night. Sullivan declined to release content of Wizek's note, addressed to his parents.

JAILHOUSE RIP-OFF

Pair Charged In Bizarre Extortion Attempt For $30

Additional charges have been filed by officials investigating a bizarre jail incident in which two inmates apparently attempted in an extortion effort to take $30 from another inmate. Their problem lay in the fact prisoners are not allowed to keep that much cash on them - and so Driscoll Barr and James Hernandez forced their victim, Charles Valenzuela, to sign a statement authorizing jail officials to turn over Valenzuela's money, or so the charges read.

The victim was serving time on a charge of malicious mischief; Barr, vehicle theft and arson; and Hernandez, drunk and disturbing the peace. They go to court Nov. 21.

When they appeared before Inyo's justice court magistrate, Don Chapman, the pair were told they'd be charged with "attempted" extortion: the judge could not bring himself to charge them with "straight extortion," because, as he said, there was no evidence to show they could have collected the $30. "I don't think anyone at the jail would have honored it," said Chapman of the note.

BOYS AND BEER

BURGLARIES STARTED WITH "TWO OR THREE CASES"

Bishop's recent kid-stuff crime spree which eventually ran into some adult-sized figures "all got started," says a policeman, "with two or three cases of beer."

The teeny-bopper beer imbibers had been walking down one of Bishop's streets "and started talking about burglarizing some places - their first venture into the grim world of crime.

And burglarize they did. In one night they managed to break into four places, and into another on a succeeding night. For their efforts they managed a haul totalling several hundred dollars, some equipment - and what police believe to be a stick of dynamite and fuse. For their ineptitude they managed to get caught - fast. More cases are pending.

"For many like them," says Police Sgt. Bill Kriens, "it is a personality problem, and once is enough. But lots depends on the court; we never know." The boys are 16 and 18. Where they got their "three-or-four cases of beer" was not immediately known.

While officers were toting up the loot, and the five charges of burglary, they were also looking into at least three other cases of crime involving teen-agers.

More significant perhaps would be the appearance on the arrest records of the names of the person or persons who sell the beer to the county's well-supplied minors.

ANTI-CRIME LEGISLATION

"Get-Tough" Bills Get Assemblyman's Support

Jumping aboard the Let's-get-tough-on-crime bandwagon last week, Assemblyman Larry Chimbole urged in a press release "passage of strong sanctions against crime."

Although the release was largely a rhetorical call for political support of anti-crime legislation, it bore this substantive report:

The assembly has:

Approved a measure aimed at "career criminals," and voted money to go to some district attorneys' offices,

Rewritten the "Uniform Determinate Sentencing Act" to set longer fixed terms for violent or "repeat" offenders,

Passed a measure tightening penalties against criminals who prey on "helpless people" - those 60 years or older, a law denying automatically probation in such cases,

Passed a measure "toughening up" on already-convicted felons - those who commit violent crimes while on parole and who can now forget about the chance of a suspended sentence or additional probation,

Strengthened penalties for certain types of crime: child pornographers, arsonists, and those who terrorize others with a threat of bodily harm or those who use firearms to make threats against peace officers engaged in performance of duty.

Some of the legislation goes into effect on January 1. The press release failed to name sponsors or backers of the bills.

ELK KILL *OFF* - FOR NOW

AWAITING A DECISION, TRIGGER FINGERS RELAX

The Fish and Game Department's on-again-off-again plans to shoot some Owens Valley Tule Elk appeared at week's end to be off-again. A Fish and Game spokesman said the Inyo office was "awaiting word" from Sacramento, expected "around the first" (of November).

Somewhere between politics, expediency and emotion rests waveringly the fate of 62 of the Owens Valley herd. Thirty others are to be shipped to another grazing range near the Concord Naval Weapons Station.

For Charles Fullerton and others in the State Fish and Game hierarchy, the decision is a controversial one; on one side stands "The Committee to Preserve the Tule Elk" and other conservation-minded groups, and on the other, cattle-producers tired of providing fodder that otherwise goes for cattle - and the law itself which limits the elks' numbers on various preserves in the state.

There are contradictions on every side. The elk may not be hunted until their numbers reach 2000 in the state; the number will never get that high if F&G holds the preserves to state-restricted numbers. As for the conservationists, they don't want any elk killed in any way.

The elk themselves refuse to co-operate with anybody and continue their well-fed, protected multiplying - "like rabbits," said one elk opponent.

Inyo's F&G supervisor Vern Koontz said there have been management problems with other animals, but none "so emotional" as that of the Tule Elk. Koontz says he thinks the arbitrary "hunting" number of 2000 was "grabbed out of the air" in Washington. Not so bad, says the supervisor, were "pre-preservationist" times when hunting was allowed. Then along came a Monterey Park woman, Tule Elk Fancier Beula Edmiston, and her energetically-former Tule Elk preservation committee.

So fearful are F&G officials of her statewide clout that they handle very carefully indeed any elk decisions. Before Edmiston there were yearly elk hunts and their number stayed, albeit precariously, between 200 and 300.

The Inyo F&G kill, with its reverse-racist intent to distribute the elk meat "among the Indians," had been set for Oct. 17.

Whatever the decision for 1977's overpopulation, the same problem is expected to turn up again - perhaps in weeks - as the elk continue their breeding.

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RENT- GOING UP

SOME WILL PAY DOUBLE SAYS DWP ENGINEER

Whatever their private grudges have been toward the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, the lessees of DWP lands and buildings have taken some comfort in the fact they have paid relatively small rent fees.

As a landlord, the DWP lease office has consistently kept its rent prices at about the same level as those charged by private lessors - and for some, well below.

All that is ending. In view of the recent breakdown in relations between DWP and its tenants, it came as a surprise to practically no one when it was learned last week that the rent bills are increasing and, in some cases, doubling.

Asked to respond concerning a number of complaints, the Owens Valley's chief engineer for DWP, Jim Wickser, said he had no immediate statistics but that "There's no doubt about it, leases are up." He said the increases are the result of "the increase in our rate of return and an increase in land value."

Explaining, Wickser went on candidly to say that "during five years of inflation, some rents could have doubled," this being due to DWP's basis for setting rent rates, a basis that was increased "one or two years ago." Before that, the basis had been "a five-percent return on the market value per year," but another percentage point - up to 6% - had been added. This, along with inflation-induced increases in market value, brought about a situation where as Wickser put it, some rents "undoubtedly have doubled."

Next in line for increases are those on department of water and power "agricultural" leases - the cattlemen and hay growers, etc. Target date will be next March when the leases are up for renewal. Thousands of acres of Inyo lands will be affected.

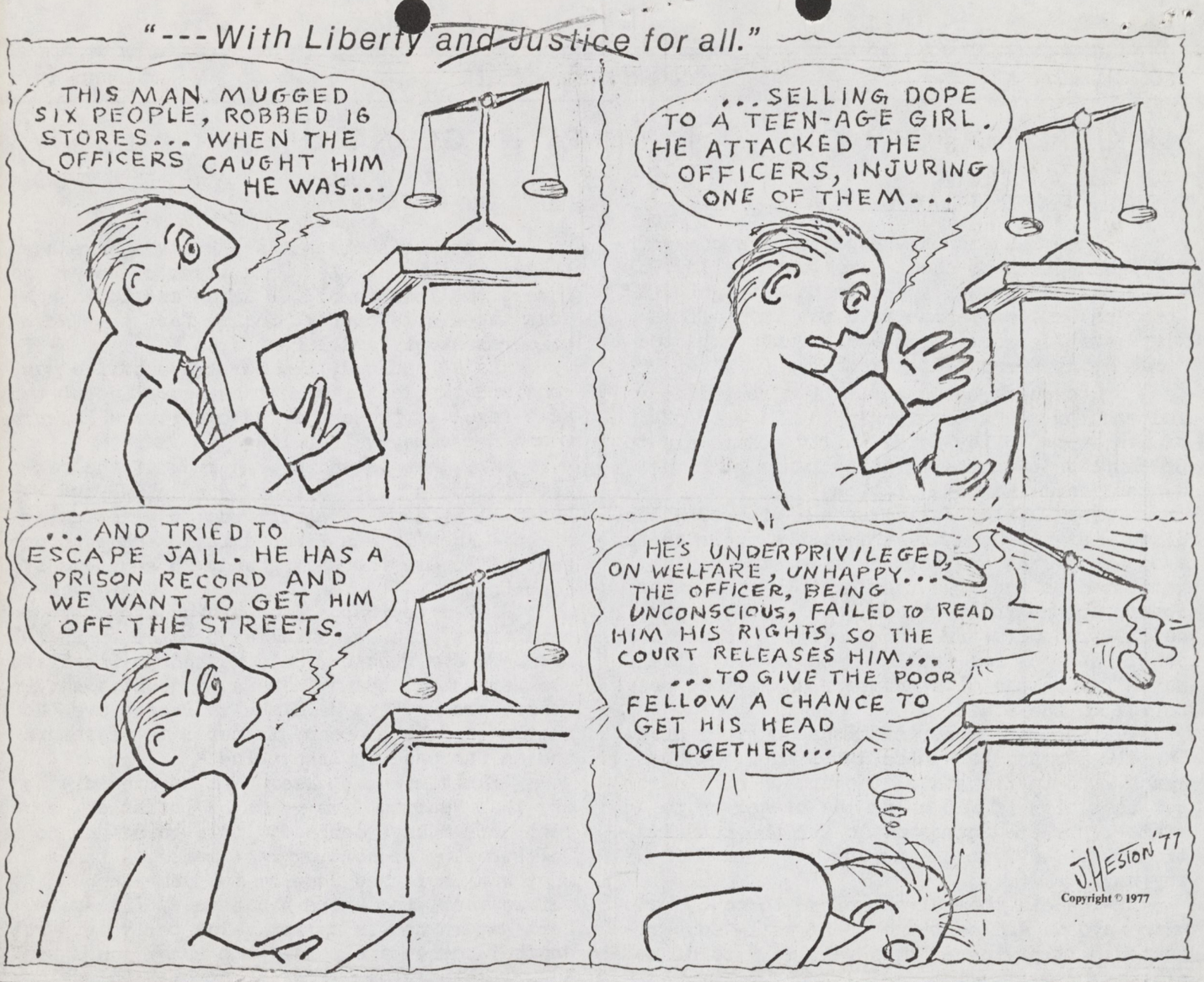
Wickser said that as far back as 1971, the DWP contracted with an appraisal firm, the American Appraisal Company. He said an appraiser is in the valley "now" and is making estimates on the value of agricultural lands.

Some of the lessees have received - or will receive - questionaires from the appraisal company which asks, among other things, what their land is used for, what it's acreage amounts to, and related questions.

"We want to find out," said Wickser, "if our cattle leases are at fair market value. And with the inflation cycle as it is, we want to take another look."

The March renewal date is coincident with the date set by an appeals court to end DWP's temporary groundwater pumping program. There are those in the county who complain that the DWP leases and the groundwater pumping issue are not unrelated; that DWP has put "pressure" on some of its leaseholders to fall into line on the water issue, a complaint that DWP denies.

Whatever reasons the department had in increasing its rents, the decision to charge more at this time was not one calculated to make the colonial rebel tenants any happier with the landlord.



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